

I am here before you today to talk about our oldest son, Wesley. I should be worrying about his finals in his freshman year in college, but instead am here to speak about the preparedness of our public schools for medical emergencies. Just over two years ago, our son was playing for an undefeated season on his varsity basketball team in Fennville. He scored the winning basket in overtime and the team held on to their perfect season. The team had shook hands with the Bridgeman team and Wesley was picked up by his teammates in celebration. Suddenly, Wesley collapsed. His best friend ran to my husband and me in the stands and said Wes was in trouble. We were by his side within 30 seconds and I knew enough to yell for an AED. I looked around and there were 3 people by his side, all three volunteering their knowledge to help. None of the three recognized that Wesley's heart had stopped because one person said he had a pulse. Wesley was making sounds that are called agonal breathing, which is labeled the breath of the dying. Instead the volunteers took it as real breaths and would not allow CPR to be administered. Two of these three were nurses and one was a local fireman with emergency training. You have to understand that I knew that these people had to know more than me, so I didn't insist on anything different. I took his shoe off and tried to cool him. The entire time Wesley is in distress, it is in front of 1,400 people.

The AED that I had screamed for was found by our principal. It had been locked in a room after students had opened the cabinet that it was housed in in the hallway. During the time it was put into a locked room, the battery had beeped for 3 months proclaiming that the battery was losing its charge. When Mrs. Lugten brought out the AED, one of the nurses opened it, and the machine did not talk. The batteries were dead and so was my son.

When the ambulance finally arrived after 10 minutes had passed, they entered the gym without any equipment. You see, people had diagnosed my son from the stands and told the dispatcher that he had heat exhaustion. Wesley was not a priority 1, and no lifesaving equipment was brought into the gym that night. As soon as the EMT's looked at him, they ran back for the gurney and equipment. Wesley sat in that ambulance with his father screaming at him to breathe for 20 minutes before the first shock was administered. By then Wesley was oxygen deprived for over 10 minutes and his heart had lost the ability to be shocked into rhythm.

I won't go into what they did to him in the hospital, but their efforts were valiant but our lack of a plan in our school had not allowed my son a second chance of life. Shane at GVSU, Mario at Ferndale, Kimberly, Kayla, Wesley, the list goes on: all of these incredible children in our Michigan schools deserved a second chance at life, but their schools were not made to be ready, or to recognize the signs of cardiac arrest. Sudden Cardiac Arrest is the leading killer of high school athletes and the leading cause of death on school campuses. Please allow this bill a chance to save someone's child. Schools will not do the right thing unless they are mandated to do so. Coaches, teachers, administrators need to be able to practice these drills and understand the cardiac signs that are presented. Calling in the emergency to 911 needs thought and one person to be in charge. I promise you, that if this bill had been passed into law before March 3, 2011, Wesley would be with us today

Please remember our son for who he was and who he was to become. Honor him and save our Michigan children and school employees. Jocelyn Leonard, mother of Wesley Leonard